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NEW LIGHT ON THE MECKLENBURG DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

BY H. ADDINGTON BRUCE.

AMONG the various problems of American history, none has proved more perplexing or productive of acrimonious controversy than the so-called Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. For close upon one hundred years, the question whether or no the national Declaration of Independence was anticipated by the action of an assemblage of North-Carolinians has been a thorn in the flesh of historians. To-day the consensus of critical opinion is adverse to the claims of those who would give the "Old North State" priority in this bold and important step, and the conviction is wide-spread that the Mecklenburg Declaration is of the stuff of which myths are made. But, within the past few months, hitherto inaccessible evidence has been secured by its supporters, and it has again become a live issue requiring more rigid scrutiny than at any other time in its stormy career. This necessary sifting and weighing the present writer would leave to others, contenting himself with stating the problem as presented in the light of the new evidence and, since it is essential to appreciation of the significance of the recent discoveries, with taking a preliminary survey of the occurrences at the Mecklenburg meeting as variously viewed by the advocates and critics of the Mecklenburg Declaration.

The entire problem hinges on what took place at this meeting, which was held in the town of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, some time during May, 1775. According to the believers in the authenticity of the Declaration, the meeting was the outcome of sundry earlier and informal gatherings, at which the leading men of the county of Mecklenburg sought to ascertain the prevailing sentiment of the county with

respect to the claims of Parliament to impose taxes and regulate the internal affairs of the colonies. It was ultimately determined that Thomas Polk, then Colonel commandant of the county, should request each militia captain to call a company meeting to elect two delegates from his company to assemble in convention at Charlotte on the 19th day of May, in order to take such measures "as to them should seem best calculated to promote the common cause of defending the rights of the colony, and aiding their brethren in Massachusetts." Meantime, certain resolutions were prepared for submission to the convention, which, the Mecklenburg claimants aver, met on the day appointed. It so happened, however, that, while the convention was in session, the news of the battle of Lexington reached Charlotte, and, intensely inflamed by the demands of the onlookers, the convention decided to substitute for the prepared resolutions a formal Declaration of Independence, to which the delegates subscribed amidst popular approval, and which ran as follows:*

"I. *Resolved*, That whosoever directly or indirectly abets, or in any way, form or manner countenances, the invasion of our rights, as attempted by the Parliament of Great Britain, is an enemy to his country, to America and to the rights of man.

"II. *Resolved*, That we, the citizens of Mecklenburg County, do hereby dissolve the political bonds which have connected us with the mother country, and absolve ourselves from all allegiance to the British Crown, abjuring all political connection with a nation that has wantonly trampled on our rights and liberties, and inhumanly shed innocent blood of Americans at Lexington.

"III. *Resolved*, That we do hereby declare ourselves a free and independent people; that we are, and of right ought to be, a sovereign and self-governing people under the power of God and the General Congress; to the maintenance of which independence we solemnly pledge to each other our mutual cooperation, our lives, our fortunes and our most sacred honor.

"IV. *Resolved*, That we hereby ordain and adopt as rules of conduct all and each of our former laws, and that the Crown of Great Britain cannot be considered hereafter as holding any rights, privileges or immunities amongst us.

"V. *Resolved*, That all officers, both civil and military, in this county,

* This is the version first made generally known by Francis Xavier Martin's "History of North Carolina," issued in 1829, but, according to the author's preface, written before 1809 and published from the unrevised manuscript. The Mecklenburg claimants contend that it is a true copy of the original Declaration.

be entitled to exercise the same powers and authorities as heretofore; that every member of this delegation shall henceforth be a civil officer and exercise the powers of a justice of the peace, issue process, hear and determine controversies according to law, preserve peace, union and harmony in the county, and use every exertion to spread the love of liberty and of country until a more general and better organized system of government be established.

“VI. *Resolved*, That a copy of these resolutions be transmitted by express to the President of the Continental Congress assembled in Philadelphia, to be laid before that body.”

After these resolutions had been adopted, Martin's History tells us:

“James Jack, then of Charlotte, but now residing in the State of Georgia,* was engaged to be the bearer of the resolutions to the President of Congress, and directed to deliver copies of them to the delegates in Congress from North Carolina. The President returned a polite answer to the address which accompanied the resolutions, in which he highly approved of the measures adopted by the delegates of Mecklenburg, but deemed the subject of the resolutions premature to be laid before Congress. Messrs. Caswell, Hooper and Hewes [the North Carolina delegates to Congress] forwarded a joint letter, in which they complimented the people of Mecklenburg for their zeal in the common cause, and recommended to them the strict observance of good order; that the time would soon come when the whole continent would follow their example.”

The opposition, which include an overwhelming majority of historians, do not deny that a meeting was held at Charlotte in May, 1775. But they contend (1) that the convention assembled not on May 19-20, but on May 31, and (2) that the resolutions adopted were twenty in number, and of quite another character than the Declaration quoted above. These resolutions, first discovered by Colonel Peter Force, of Washington, and announced by him through the “National Intelligencer” in December, 1838, merely provided a temporary form of government for the county of Mecklenburg, “until instructions from the Provincial Congress regulating the jurisprudence of the province

* Captain Jack died in 1822, seven years before Martin's work went to press. This fact is cited by Dr. George W. Graham, of Charlotte, the son of the late Governor William A. Graham, and now the most prominent advocate of the authenticity of the Mecklenburg Declaration, as a reason for accepting Martin's statement that his History was published without revision of the manuscript as prepared by him before 1809. The importance of this point will develop as the narrative of the controversy proceeds.

shall provide otherwise, or the legislative body of Great Britain resign its unjust and arbitrary pretensions with respect to America." They breathed an independent spirit, to be sure, but they did not in so many words declare for independence, and they fell far short of the defiant and bellicose expressions of the Martin version. They were originally published, it later appeared, in the "South Carolina Gazette and County Journal," of June 13, 1775, and they were republished in the "New York Journal," of June 29, 1775, and in the "Massachusetts Spy," of July 12, 1775. To the argument based on these resolutions, known from their date as the "Thirty-first Resolves," the Mecklenburg claimants reply (1) that the date ascribed to them is erroneous; (2) that they are the resolutions which it was originally intended to submit to the convention; (3) that measures embodying the same powers as the Thirty-first Resolves were enacted by the delegates immediately after adopting the Declaration; and (4) that if all that was done by the convention was the adoption of the Thirty-first Resolves, there would have been no reason for transmitting copies post-haste to the Continental Congress, nor would the Thirty-first Resolves, with their comparatively tame resolutions, have elicited from the President of Congress and the North Carolina delegates to Congress the comments ascribed to them by Martin. In explanation of the fact that the Thirty-first Resolves found their way into print, it is suggested by the present leader of the Mecklenburg claimants, Dr. George W. Graham,* that doubtless copies of the proposed resolutions were sent to the delegates-elect, so that they might make themselves acquainted with the details of the intended action, and that one of these copies fell into the hands of the editor of the "South Carolina Gazette and County Journal," who printed it in the mistaken belief that the resolutions had actually been adopted, and supplied the date which has been the source of such additional controversy.

These, briefly, are the opposing views.† And now it is neces-

* In a conversation with the writer, April 14, 1906.

† For the best exposition of the case against the Mecklenburg Declaration, the reader is referred to the late Rev. Dr. J. C. Welling's article on the subject in the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, April, 1874; while the case for the Declaration is ably presented in Dr. George W. Graham's "The Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence," 1905. The new evidence to be presented in these pages has, however, been discovered since Dr. Graham's work was published.

sary to indicate rapidly the successive stages in the long-enduring dispute. Whatever the reason, it was almost forty-five years before the occurrences at Charlotte became a matter of general knowledge. In 1819, John McKnitt Alexander, son of the secretary of the convention, writing under the name of "John McKnitt," contributed to the "Raleigh Register" an account of the proceedings, including a copy of the resolutions adopted. This copy was essentially similar to the subsequently published Martin copy, but differed from the latter in phraseology, in being partially written in the past tense, and in omitting the sixth resolution. It was certified:

"The foregoing is a true copy of the papers on the above subject left in my hands by John McKnitt Alexander, deceased. I find it mentioned on file that the original book was burned, April, 1800; that a copy of the proceedings was sent to Hugh Williamson, then writing a history of North Carolina, and that a copy was sent to General W. R. Davie."

This publication reappeared in the "Essex Register" and came to the notice of John Adams, who, impressed with the resemblance between certain phrases in the Mecklenburg Declaration and the Fourth of July Declaration, and being at the time in unfriendly relations with Jefferson, hastened to call the latter's attention to "John McKnitt's" statement. Jefferson, smarting under the imputation of plagiarism,* wrote to Adams in reply: "You seem to think it genuine. I believe it spurious. I deem it to be a very unjustifiable quiz." From that moment the controversy was under way.

On the one hand, it was asserted that the great Virginian had freely borrowed from the Mecklenburg in drafting the Fourth of July Declaration; on the other, that the latter was the basis of the former, which was denounced as a cruel hoax. The seeming attempt on the part of "John McKnitt" to conceal his identity,† the long interval of silence between event and an-

* At this day it seems peculiar that, so far as concerns Jefferson, the accusation of plagiarism should have been a factor in the controversy. As was pointed out by Dr. Welling, the fact is that, with one exception, the parallel phrases in the Fourth of July Declaration were written, not by Jefferson, but by Richard Henry Lee.

† It was otherwise contended, however, and not without force, that Mr. Alexander frequently dropped his surname, the better to *disclose* his identity, on account of the commonness of the name "Alexander" in that section of the country. The writer is informed that there are to-day several hundred "Alexanders" in the Mecklenburg region.

nouncement, the absence of documentary evidence—all this conspired to create an atmosphere of suspicion. Charges and countercharges were freely made by both parties, theories advanced which are still operating to cloud perception of the real points at issue. Then came the publication of Martin's History with its variant version, declared by some to be a reproduction of the actual resolutions, by others to be merely the "John McKnitt" copy polished and refined. There seemed to be no way of terminating what was rapidly developing into a sectional quarrel, and the State of North Carolina decided upon official intervention. During the winter of 1830-31, the General Assembly appointed a Committee to take evidence on the subject. Depositions were obtained from witnesses then living, who had personal knowledge of the meeting at Charlotte. Their testimony was uniformly, but vaguely, to the effect that independence had been declared, and the Committee rendered a favorable report, affirming the evidence to be satisfactory and directing the Government to cause to be published a pamphlet containing the Mecklenburg Declaration, the names of the delegates subscribing thereto, and the certificates of the witnesses testifying to the attendant circumstances.

This merely added fuel to the fire already burning so briskly. The dependence thus placed upon the known fallibility of human memory was alone sufficient to excite the derision of the critical. Nor was it long before a new turn was given to the controversy by a statement contained in a criticism of Tucker's "Life of Jefferson," written by the Rev. Dr. Francis L. Hawks for the "New York Review," of March, 1837. In his paper, Dr. Hawks revived against Jefferson the old charge of plagiarism, and asserted that the Mecklenburg Declaration would be found in a June, 1775, issue of the "Cape Fear Mercury," a copy of which, it was stated, was on file in the British State Paper Office, where it had been placed by Lord Dartmouth, who had received it from Governor Martin of North Carolina, the chief executive at the time of the Charlotte convention. Soon after the publication of this statement, according to Lyman Draper, application for the loan of this copy of the "Cape Fear Mercury" was made by United States Minister Stevenson, who, receiving it in August, 1837, failed to return it, and died twenty years later without divulging its contents. The natural suppo-

sition would seem to be that he was erroneously credited with borrowing the copy, but the advocates of the Mecklenburg Declaration hold that he secured it, found in it evidence supporting their case, and, from a desire to shield Jefferson's reputation, resolved to maintain silence. Color is given to the claim that Minister Stevenson did receive the missing "Mercury" by the fact that in 1863 the historian Wheeler, after a fruitless search in London, made application to Mr. Stevenson's son (the diplomat being dead), and was informed that, although the paper could not be found among his father's effects, memoranda had been discovered indicating that it had once been in the minister's possession. In any event, the copy is still missing from the British archives, and, as no other copy of that particular issue has come to light, its contents remain unknown.*

The necessity for examining it was emphasized within little more than a year from the time attention was first drawn to it. In December, 1838, Colonel Force announced his discovery of the Thirty-first Resolves, and it was immediately said by the opponents of the Declaration that in the "Cape Fear Mercury"

* In "Collier's Weekly," of July 1, 1905, there appeared an article on the Mecklenburg Declaration written by Dr. S. Millington Miller, and including a facsimile reproduction of what purported to be the lost copy of the "Cape Fear Mercury." A note stated that it had been discovered among Mr. Stevenson's effects. The announcement created considerable surprise, and was received with wide-spread scepticism on the part of the advocates as well as the opponents of the Declaration. It was noticed that, as printed in facsimile, the Declaration contained but three articles, and corresponded with neither the Martin nor the "John McKnitt" copy, but with a "broadside" issued after the publication of "John McKnitt's" letter in the "Raleigh Register." Late in 1905, Mr. A. S. Salley, Jr., of South Carolina, issued a pamphlet attacking Dr. Miller's copy of the "Mercury" as a forgery, and adducing evidence to show that in the production of the alleged forgery aid was had from a genuine copy of a November, 1769, issue of the "Mercury," now in the possession of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. Meanwhile, Dr. Miller had invited a committee from Charlotte to examine his copy, which he appraised at \$5,000. On December 30, 1905, this committee, consisting of Dr. George W. Graham, Professor Alexander Graham and Mr. R. O. Alexander, met Dr. Miller in Baltimore, and after seeing the copy agreed to buy it, provided he secured from Mr. Worthington C. Ford, the old document expert, a certificate warranting it genuine. To this Dr. Miller consented. The committee returned home, and in the "Charlotte Observer," of January 1, 1906, published a report in which they gave sundry reasons for believing that they had not seen in Dr. Miller's possession a genuine copy of the "Cape Fear Mercury." In this belief they were confirmed by Mr. Ford, who, January 9, sent them a long report on the subject. Mr. Ford has since written (in the April issue of the "American Historical Review") a comprehensive statement of his findings.

would be found not the Declaration but the Resolves. These, it was jubilantly claimed, formed the true Declaration, or rather the fabric out of which had been composed, by the faulty memory of the participants, the defiance said to have been hurled at the home authorities by the blunt, outspoken patriots of Mecklenburg. For the moment the friends of the Declaration were too dazed to attempt a reply; but, rallying, they assailed their adversaries with a fusillade of queries, not the least pertinent of which was: If the action taken were simply that described by the Thirty-first Resolves, why should Governor Martin, in his address to the Executive Council on June 25, 1775,* speak of "the late most treasonable publication of a committee in the county of Mecklenburg, explicitly renouncing obedience to His Majesty's Government," and in a subsequent proclamation† declare: "Whereas I have also seen a most infamous publication in the 'Cape Fear Mercury' importing to be Resolves of a set of people stiling themselves a committee for the county of Mecklenburg, most traitorously declaring the entire dissolution of the laws, government and constitution of this country"? But it was easier to propound awkward questions than to answer the questions with which they themselves were confronted, and the Mecklenburg claimants were gradually driven to rest their case upon evidence inadmissible in the court of history. For the time being, it seemed as though they must be utterly discredited, their discomfiture being increased by the discovery, first announced in 1853,‡ that the Davie copy, referred to by "John McKnitt," bore a certificate in the well-known handwriting of John McKnitt Alexander, Sr., setting forth that it was merely a transcript from memory. The Davie and "John McKnitt" versions being identical, added strength was given to the belief that the Thirty-first Resolves were the basis for both, as well as for the Martin version. This belief has steadily gained adherents, until to-day the Declaration commands the assent of few outside of North Carolina, and not of all within the borders of that State itself.

* "Colonial Records of North Carolina," Vol. X, pp. 38-39.

† *Ibid.*, Vol. X, pp. 144-145.

‡ By Professor Charles Phillips, in the "North Carolina University Magazine," May, 1853.

Time, however, brings about strange changes, and the possibility of historians being compelled to reverse their verdict on the Mecklenburg Declaration would now seem to be imminent. One of the strongest points hitherto advanced against the Declaration has been the alleged fact that it was never heard of prior to "John McKnitt's" publication in the "Raleigh Register" in 1819. In vain did the friends of the Declaration call attention to the traditions of the countryside, to the testimony of the witnesses in the legislative inquiry of 1830-31, to the statement of Dr. Hawks that the historian Martin had assured him that he had utilized for his version of the Declaration a copy procured "in the western part of the State, prior to 1800," and to the statement of Governor Stokes that, in the year 1793, the historian Williamson had shown to him, in Fayetteville, N. C., a copy of the Declaration in the handwriting of John McKnitt Alexander, Sr. They were invariably, and properly, met by the objection that in all this there entered the untrustworthy element of memory, and that they could establish their case only by producing documentary proof. It was pointed out that, if the people of Mecklenburg County actually did declare themselves independent of Great Britain, the fact would surely be mentioned in contemporary documents, letters, newspapers. The reasonableness of this is obvious, but not until recent years do the defenders of the Declaration seem to have appreciated the necessity of discarding tradition, hearsay and assumption. Indeed, their latest plea, Dr. Graham's book, is in large measure a reploughing of this barren field. On the other hand, Dr. Graham summons to his aid more documentary evidence than did any of his predecessors. He cites, for instance, the fact that numerous deeds executed during and immediately after the Revolutionary War, and now on file in the court-house at Charlotte, contain what he regards as explicit references to the Mecklenburg Declaration. Among such, he quotes: "This indenture made this 13th day of February, 1779, and in the fourth year of our independence"; "This indenture made this 28th day of January, in the fifth year of our independence and the year of our Lord Christ 1780"; "This indenture made on the 19th day of May, and in the year of our Lord 1783, and in the eighth year of our independence." He also adduces documentary evidence in support of the authenticity of the poem "The Meck-

lenburg Censor," said to have been written in 1777. This poem speaks of the day

"When Mecklenburg's fantastic rabble,
Renowned for censure, scold and gabble,
In Charlotte met in giddy council,
To lay the constitution's ground-sill,"

and avers that

"First to withdraw from British trust,
In Congress, they, the very first,
Their Independence did declare."

Again, Dr. Graham quotes from a schoolboy's declamation on the Charlotte convention, printed in the "Catawba Journal," of July 11, 1826, and by that paper credited to the "Raleigh Minerva," of August 10, 1809, or ten years before the publication of the storm-provoking "John McKnitt" statement.

It is to this schoolhouse speech that special attention must first be called. When Dr. Graham wrote, he was obliged to quote from the secondary, *post* "John McKnitt" source, the "Catawba Journal," and was under the impression that no copy remained of the August 10, 1809, issue of the "Raleigh Minerva." One has since been discovered through the efforts of Mr. M. De Lancey Haywood, who, early in the present year, found it in Raleigh. It is now in the possession of a family descended from its publisher, William Boylan. A photographic facsimile, forwarded to the writer by Professor Alexander Graham, school superintendent of Charlotte and long a student of the Mecklenburg problem, discloses some slight variations from the "Catawba Journal" reprint, and one discrepancy—in the matter of the year of the convention—which might at first glance seem important, but is doubtless either a misprint in the "Minerva" or a slip of the speaker's memory. The following is the reference to the Declaration as published in the "Minerva":

"On the 19th day of May, 1776, a day sacredly exulting to every Mecklenburg bosom, two delegates duly authorized from every militia company in this county met in Charlotte. . . . After a cool and deliberate investigation of the causes and extent of our differences with G. Britain, and taking a view of the probable result; pledging their all in support of their rights and liberties; they solemnly entered into and

published a full and determined *declaration* [the italics are the "Minerva's"] of Independence, renouncing forever all allegiance, dependence on or connection with Great Britain; dissolved all judicial and military establishments emanating from the British crown; established others on principles correspondent with their declaration, which went into immediate operation: All which were transmitted to Congress by express, and probably expedited the general Declaration of Independence. May we ever act worthy of such predecessors."

From this publication it seems manifest that the schoolboy orator had the assistance of something other than tradition in preparing his address; and that, whatever the source of his statements, they corroborate alike the "John McKnitt" and Martin accounts in naming the 19th, not the 31st, of May as the day of the meeting, in averring the adoption of an explicit Declaration of Independence, and in relating the transmission of copies of the Declaration to the Continental Congress. The boy's address, it must be kept clearly in mind, was delivered and printed in 1809, ten years before the date when, the opponents of the Declaration urge, it was made known for the first time. In this connection, Mr. Haywood has discovered another, though less important, bit of evidence. Searching through the old documents and newspapers preserved in the State Library at Raleigh, he found a copy of the "Raleigh Register," of July 28, 1808, containing an account of that year's Fourth of July celebration at Charlotte. The festivities, it appears, included a banquet, in the course of which one Joseph Pearson offered as a toast: "The patriots of Mecklenburg; the first to declare Independence. . . . May their sons be the last to acknowledge themselves slaves." This adds nothing to our knowledge of the details of the gathering at Charlotte, but it is significant as a pointed reference antedating by more than a year the schoolboy's address published in the "Raleigh Minerva," and by almost eleven years the "John McKnitt" contribution to the "Raleigh Register."

Still more valuable than either of these additional items of evidence, at least in the eyes of the friends of the Declaration, is a discovery made within the past few months by Mr. O. J. Lehman, of Bethania, N. C., a town which was first settled in 1759 by a number of Moravian Brethren, who moved thither from their original North Carolina home of Bethabara. It is the custom of the Moravians to keep a journal of contempo-

aneous events, and in their archives at Bethania are records covering the period 1755 to 1905, written in German script by the most learned men of the Brotherhood. In examining these, Mr. Lehman came upon a forty-page manuscript, in the form of a pamphlet, entitled: "Fragment. Record of the Events during the Revolutionary War which had a Reference to Wachovia, to the end of 1779." This record, Mr. Lehman found, opened with the events of the year 1775, and in the chronicle for that year was a passage which, translated, reads:

"At the end of the year 1775, I cannot omit to mention that in the summer of this same year, that is to say, in May, June or July, the county of Mecklenburg in North Carolina declared itself free and independent of England, and for itself made such arrangements for the administration of law as the Continental Congress later made for all. But this Congress considered these proceedings premature."

Impressed with his discovery, Mr. Lehman communicated it to the "Charlotte Observer," and efforts were begun to ascertain when and by whom the record was written. From the reference to the subsequent action of Congress, it was evident that the Mecklenburg paragraph was penned some time after 1775, and the question immediately rose—At what time? The first attempt at an answer, so far as the writer is aware, is contained in an article published in the "Charlotte Observer," of April 15, 1906, and contributed by Adelaide L. Fries, of Winston-Salem, N. C., who believes she has shown that the record was written at Salem in the autumn of 1783 by one Traugott Bagge. Her reasons for so believing deserve to be quoted, in part, at any rate, for their general as well as historical interest:

"The 'Fragment' is neither a diary, nor a mechanical compilation from a diary. It is a historical sketch, well written, clear cut, showing keen insight into the affairs of the State and nation, as well as the most intimate acquaintance with events in Wachovia. While for convenience the author divides his account into years, he frequently runs forward to link some result to its cause. For example, in reciting some of the events early in 1775, he states that the sailors on the English merchant-ships in Charleston harbor, being unable to secure permission to land their cargoes, simply threw them overboard so that they could load with rice and sail for home. Salt was one of the articles so destroyed, and he comments on the great scarcity of this prime necessity later on, and the suffering that the saving of this salt might have averted. Paper money claims his attention in each year's history; but,

in speaking of the first year's issue without royal authority, in 1775, he notes its utter loss of value late in the war; and, again, in 1777, he mentions the statement by the Assembly of 1783 that the depreciation began in '77. The introduction of later developments in the Mecklenburg paragraph is, therefore, quite in keeping with the rest of the paper, and its form is also paralleled by similar additions at the close of other years, where items which had been omitted in the current account were added at the close. This paragraph is plainly a part of the original document, and entitled to all the credence that may be given to any part thereof.

"Although found in Bethania, this paper was most certainly written by a man who lived in Salem during the Revolutionary War. Not only does the whole story centre about Salem, then already the principal town of Wachovia, but events transpiring there are given with a certain intimate knowledge that can have no other explanation. The paper must have been taken to Bethania at some later date, perhaps in comparatively recent years.

"The handwriting of the 'Fragment' differs from that found in the Church Diaries of those years, and certain features in the paper itself suggested Traugott Bagge as its author. This was confirmed beyond a question by finding in the Land Office in Salem several annual statements of the store, written, dated and signed by Traugott Bagge. The script, though small, is unusually firm and distinct, and it is possible to compare two specimens letter by letter. When this test is applied to the 'Fragment,' with these annual statements as the standard, the writing of the 'Fragment' is found to be Bagge's throughout. Moreover, in the body of the 'Fragment' there is given a list of the men who signed a certain paper explaining the position of the Moravians in regard to the War, and their neutrality, and in this list appears the name of Traugott Bagge. Laid by the side of the signed statements already alluded to, it becomes evident that this name is a genuine signature, and by the fortunate insertion of the list the signature of the author is contained in the body of the paper, although it does not appear at the end.

"This not only proves the author, but guarantees the accuracy of statements in the 'Fragment,' for Bagge was the most able man of affairs in Wachovia during the War. At that time, the store was the centre of trade for all the country round, and under Bagge's skilful management the necessities of life were never entirely lacking for those who depended on his store to supply them. . . . As merchant, financier, politician, as a sturdy, conscientious man, Traugott Bagge ranks among the first in the history of the State.

"The question of date presents the most difficulty, but by a process of elimination it has become possible to decide on the month and year in which it was written, and the occasion for it. . . . The latest date in the 'Fragment' is contained in the reference to the Assembly of 1783, already mentioned. This Assembly met in the spring, so the paper could not have been written before April, 1783. . . . On December

30, the Altesten Conference fixed the programme for New Year's eve: 'The children shall have their closing meeting at three o'clock; the adult congregation shall have a love-feast at eight in the evening; at ten o'clock the Memorabilia for this year and for the War shall be read, and the closing meeting shall follow at half past eleven.' This is confirmed by the diary for December 31, which says of the ten-o'clock service that they 'remembered the many mercies which the Lord had showed them not only during the year, but throughout the eight years' war.' It will be noted that Bagge's name does not appear, and the War Memorabilia, under the title of '*Lob und Dankopfer*,' read in the service and filed with the diary, is in the handwriting of John Frederick Peter, then minister in Salem. But Peter did not come to Wachovia until 1780, would therefore have no knowledge of events prior to that time, and it seems evident that, when he began to collect the memoranda which he presented to the Altesten Conference early in October, he turned to Bagge, who at his request wrote the 'Fragment' under discussion. This explains why Bagge ended his account with December, 1779, for from that time on Peter knew all the circumstances, and the closing then is otherwise explicable, for he stops just short of the time when Wachovia came directly in contact with the opposing forces, and passed the most perilous and exciting days of her history. The paper was far too long to read in a one-hour service, but the '*Lob und Dankopfer*' is strikingly like a résumé of Bagge's sketch, and the supposition that it is such is strengthened by the fact that in the archives of Bethlehem, Pa., there are two copies of the '*Lob und Dankopfer*,' one of which, evidently the rough copy, is in Peter's handwriting, while additional notes pasted on the margin, and slipped loose between the leaves, are in Bagge's handwriting. The other, incorporating many of these notes, is entirely in Peter's handwriting. That Bagge, having helped Peter prepare his paper, should later, without any apparent reason, take the trouble to amplify the sketch to the limits of the 'Fragment' seems most improbable. . . . Traugott Bagge died in April, 1800, but a close scrutiny of the diary from January, 1784, on, fails to give a single reason for the writing of such a paper. . . ."

Here seems to be a sound chain of reasoning to establish the authenticity, authorship and date of the pamphlet. Once admitting that it was written in 1783, or thereabouts, it must be conceded that the friends of the Mecklenburg Declaration have recovered a striking piece of evidence in support of their case. Taken together, the Graham-Haywood-Lehman discoveries point unmistakably to recognition of the existence of a Mecklenburg Declaration long before "John McKnitt's" letter precipitated the century-old dispute. Historians can no longer afford to treat the problem with the superstition of incredulity. They have now to deal, not with nebulous theories nor with hypotheses

sustained by little more than the enthusiasm of local pride and patriotism; but with concrete data which must be accepted or explained away. Decidedly the time has arrived for a thorough review of all the evidence, new and old, tending to prove or disprove the claim that in North Carolina independence of the authority of Great Britain was first formally articulated by her children across the seas.

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